

Frequently Asked Questions about extended entitlement for working parents

1. How will we define who is eligible using hours or income?

A: The additional 15 hours (extended entitlement) will be available to families where:

- Both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), and each parent earns, **on average, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours** at national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW), and each parent earns less than £100,000 per year.
- Parents' earnings must reflect the equivalent value of at least 16 hours of work at NMW or NLW, which is £107 a week at the current NMW rate. This includes those parents on zero-hour contracts who meet the criteria.
- The minimum amount will always be judged against the lowest hourly rate that a person of the parent's age could legally be paid as minimum wage rates are different for younger age group workers.***
- Working will include employed and self-employed persons and those on zero hour contracts, and also those away from work due to statutory sick pay, maternity, paternity or adoption leave and where one parent is working and the other is in receipt of benefits due to caring responsibility or disability (more to follow on this).

***At present, the living wage is £7.20 an hour. Therefore, the minimum income requirement for a parent (over 25) is £115.20 a week. The minimum wage for 21 to 24 year olds is £6.70 an hour – therefore, the minimum income requirement for this group is £107.20 a week. For 18 – 21 year olds it is £5.30 therefore requirement is £84.80 per week. And for under 18s it is £3.87 for and £3.30 for apprentices (under 19 or in first year of apprentice)

2. How will we communicate this to parents including those without internet access?

A: We will use a number of routes to communicate with parents across the city this is not an exhaustive list but we plan to include: council and Family Information Service websites and social media including Facebook pages and twitter, leaflets and posters in council and community buildings, press releases to local media, Citylife (free council magazine out in November and March), mail out or texts to Sure Start registered families of appropriately aged children.

We will also be encouraging all providers, schools and partners in Job Centre Plus and health visiting to share information with parents including leaflets and posters between winter 2016 and summer 2017.

The attached information handouts with these FAQs can be circulated to parents and families and will be on the Council's websites and available through Sure Start Children's Centres

3. Will there be information sessions for parents?

A: We are considering how best to reach all families with the limited resources that the city council have to promote this entitlement, but recognise that many working parents may not be able to attend sessions due to work or childcare responsibilities.

We will consider the following for the Spring term 2017:

- Supporting childcare providers and schools to run information sessions
- Supporting Sure Start, Job Centre Plus and Health visiting to run information sessions
- Providing online information including a dedicated email address and perhaps a phone line that parents can ring to find out more.

4. How will we ensure parents understand it is 22 hours all year round or 30 hours term time only?

A: The government is promoting the offer under the term “30 hours free childcare for working parents” and “extended entitlement” and at times the “over 38 weeks or equivalent number of hours across more weeks per year” is missed off.

We need to think about how to describe this locally, recognising that at present people understand that Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE) is 15 hours free childcare for three and four year olds, if taken term time only.

We propose initially to use the term “30 hours free childcare - Extended Entitlement for Working Parents” – as parents understand the present 15 hours free childcare offer, and then explain the options in taking the hours. Using 22 hours also comes with some complications:

- a) The majority of early education provision in Newcastle is term time and the majority of working parents will need provision all year round.
- b) The exact number of hours might vary given the provision type chosen and weeks they operate
- c) Parents may choose to use different provision and a different number of hours across the year i.e. term time and holiday provision.

5. What if a parent is on “zero-hour” contract or has varying monthly hours and income?

A: The guidance refers to an average of 16 hours work per week and families who are eligible need to declare that they expect to be working this average over a 3 month period (quarter).

6. How will parents check eligibility?

A: The government has set out its intention to develop a single, seamless online childcare application system for parents wishing to apply for both Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours of free childcare. This will allow working parents to apply for both schemes at the same time avoiding the need for them to provide the same information twice to government.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tax-free-childcare-10-things-parents-should-know>

As part of the eligibility checking process, parents will need to declare that they expect to earn the equivalent of 16 hours national minimum or living wage on average each week over the next quarter. This quarterly declaration period has been designed to help those on fluctuating incomes, including those on “zero hour” contracts, to meet the criteria. Self-employed parents will be able to assess their expected income either over the next declaration period or for the current tax year. Parents can be in receipt of any other form of childcare support and still access the extended entitlement.

Once children have had their eligibility confirmed their parents will be able to access 30 hours free childcare at any participating provider. The local authority will then verify the eligibility of the children with each provider as part of our role to make sure that taxpayers’ money is appropriately used. We will be adapting the Department for Education’s existing Eligibility Checking System for the two-year-old entitlement and Free School Meals to support this new verification process.

7. What forms will parents use?

A: In the future we believe that parents will apply online (see above). In the immediate period before the online checker is finalised we will use two separate forms one for pre-checks for PVI settings which will combine the two year old check, EYPP and 30 hour childcare, and a second form for parents applying for a nursery class place from September 2017. These forms will be temporary and will allow us to assess in advance the likely demand and interest in the extended entitlement. (see link attached documentation)

8. How can Family Service Directory (FSD) support parents to use multiple providers in partnership and how will those without internet access this information?

A: The FSD now called the Newcastle Support Directory see: www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk will continue to provide information on all registered childcare in Newcastle. We will work to improve the present school pick up / collection option on the website to include partnerships between existing providers. This will be developed in the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms (2016-2017).

As usual as well as using the website parents and providers can email or ring in with the following details.

Email: admissions.information@newcastle.gov.uk

Phone: 0191 278 7878 - Ask for Admissions and Information team

9. How will key partners and professionals in health, Job Centre Plus, education, socialcare and Sure Start be involved?

A: We will provide regular briefings for these partners. Schools, Job Centre Plus and Sure Start are represented on our Steering Group, but we will look to consult with and ask for support from other partners and provide information as explained in Question 2 above.

10. Will parents get golden tickets and will the LA have a list of eligible parents?

A: The Department for Education has not proposed that Local Authorities will receive information on eligible families as we do with those eligible for Two Year Old funded childcare. See Question 6 on checking eligibility.

11. What will providers be given to support this project?

A: We will plan to provide a complete guide to all providers by the Summer term of 2017, before this date we will be producing model forms for collecting information from parents and initial publicity explaining the extended offer for working parents. See attached with this guidance

12. What if I don't want to recommend another provider to deliver the wrap around for the extended entitlement for working parents (22 / 30 hours)?

A: Ofsted registers and inspects many types of childcare provision. They set standards to ensure that settings offer safe and caring environments and offer activities based on the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. The Local Authority does not recommend any provider over another and we do not expect providers to recommend others. We recognise the importance of parental choice which would include could visiting providers, reading Ofsted reports etc. The Newcastle Support Directory (previously Family Service Directory) provides information about provision including contact details and location, and also a link to Ofsted reports that you should encourage parents to refer to.

We will need to consider the wording and information to support parents using multiple provision including how we inform them of all the registered providers that can offer all or part of the extended entitlement.

But in practice we know that some parents use more than one provider for childcare already with the universal 15 hours, so we believe the present systems support this.

13. Will you provide models and case studies of delivery for 22 / 30 hours? i.e. especially when some parents will be eligible for 15 hours and some 30 hours.

A: Yes. We have a number of examples of providers who offer early education in partnership across the city and we will look at sharing these case studies in the Autumn / Spring term.

14. What is the "grace period" / notice for changes in parent/s' earnings / hours?

A: We are awaiting a response to government's consultation last term from the DFE. This proposed half term "grace periods" which we believed were not sufficient. . We expect the response to this consultation by the end of the Autumn term.

15. What is the funding rate?

A: We are waiting for the Early Years (EY) funding review. On 25 November 2015 the Chancellor announced that the government will invest an extra £1 billion per year by 2019-20 in the early

education entitlements. This includes nearly £300 million per year from 2017-18 for a significant uplift to the national average rate paid to childcare providers for the two-, three- and four-year-old entitlements.

This is sufficient to increase the national average hourly rate for three- and four-year-olds from £4.56 to £4.88. The national average two-year-old rate will increase from £5.09 to £5.39. Decisions about future funding rates were informed by the Department's Review of the Cost of Childcare. This is the most detailed review of its kind done at national level, and provides us with a strong evidence base on the drivers of costs for childcare providers. The investment will take overall government investment in childcare, including through the Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare programmes, to £6 billion by the end of this Parliament - the highest ever investment in childcare.

These are national averages and the national average for two year funding is £5.09 but Newcastle only receives £4.85 per hour. Also these averages include the disadvantage supplements and the EYPP payments. So while this information indicates more money will be available nationally we cannot presume any increases in Newcastle and will wait for the EY Funding review which we believe will take place in the Autumn term.

You will be aware there has been consultation on the proposed new funding rates for both three and four year old funding and two year old funding. Once the government responds to the Early Years Funding Review consultation we will then invite providers to a workshop to discuss how we set a new Local Funding formula. This will take place either late Autumn 2016 or early Spring 2017.

16. What about SEND funding?

A: As part of the Early Years Funding review there are proposals to bring in an additional fund for children in receipt of Disability Living allowance as well as formalising an Inclusion Fund (i.e. our present Additional Needs Funds). We have requested confirmation of whether this fund should now support access to 30 hours for those eligible and will provide guidance when this has been clarified.

17. Will there be further workshops and briefing sessions?

A: We plan to hold workshops this term on the Early Years Funding review. It is anticipated that we would hold another series of workshops in Spring 2017.

18. Can we deliver the 30 hours term time only rather than stretching hours all year round?

A: Yes, no individual provider has to change the way they offer provision now. Many of our providers are only able to open term time and others may not be able to offer more than the present FEYE of 15 hours. The local authority has the duty to support parents accessing the extended entitlement and we will work with all providers to support individual or groups of parents to access wrap around or partnership provision to complement your quality provision.

19. How will we ensure the accuracy of information on providers for parents?

A: The Newcastle Service Directory can be updated by all our early years and childcare providers. We will work closely with you to ensure that your information is up to date and correct and hope to

continue to improve this if this is not the case you can email:
admissions.information@newcastle.gov.uk

20. Can the model forms include more information i.e. languages, Newcastle City Council logo, explanation of 22/30 hours, weekly income banding and information about different scenarios?

A: Yes. See attached new parent agreement form with guidance. And information leaflets regarding scenarios.

21. What do we do if parents don't complete the whole form?

A: Parents who do not provide enough information cannot be assessed for eligibility. Ask parents to complete the full information if they wish to be receive a funded place, so if you allow a parent to start without this information they would need to pay for the place whether eligible or not.

22. Can we use our own application form instead of or as well as your form?

A: We need to get parents to sign the agreement as worded on the form we provide. If you wish to combine this form and your local form you will need to use the exact wording and ensure parents have signed this form.

23. FSD doesn't always work well on mobile phone?

A: We will be looking at how the FSD now Newcastle Support Directory works on phones and tablets as well as computers over the next few months. Please feedback any specific concerns to admissions.information@newcastle.gov.uk

24. Logo for 30 hour offer?

A: We can look at this and will see if the national campaign comes up with a logo.

25. What about surveys of parents and online questionnaires or questionnaires for our own parents?

A: We are developing both an online and paper consultation for parents and providers. See draft attached

26. What about Out of School and Holiday Clubs?

A: All childcare providers registered on the Ofsted Early Years register are eligible to access the funding although some may choose not to. Some out of school clubs and Holiday Clubs only care for children once they have started reception class.

FAQs which need more work.

27. Free School meals issue?

A: Free School Meals must be provided for children who are registered pupils of a maintained school, who access free early education both before and after lunch and whose parents are in receipt of qualifying benefits.

For example; if a child attends two and half days and is eligible for FSM the school would need to provide lunch on the two full days the child attends. If however the child attends five mornings or five afternoon there would be no requirement to provide a meal.

If a child attends any maintained, private, voluntary or independent setting and access free early education both before and after lunch the setting would need to do one of the following;

1. Provide a meal for that child
2. Allow the family to provide a packed lunch for the child

Setting cannot insist that families pay for food that is provided during the child's free early education time, this would be considered a condition of access and is not permitted.

28. How will you track multiple settings

A: Where a child attends more than one provider the parents are required to inform all providers that the child is accessing a free education place in more than one setting. The parent is also required to inform each provider of the name/s of the other setting and the number of hours the child is accessing for free.

There is space for parents to do this on our parent agreement form (see attached) that is currently used by PVI providers.

PVI Providers are then required to inform the Local Authority of any dual provision on the headcount they return.

In addition to this the local authority will monitor dual provision claims across the city through both the headcount and census process. If a family are claiming more than their entitlement the local authority will contact the providers involved and come to the best arrangement possible.

29. What data will we need to collect and monitor?

A: PVI providers will continue to provide both full and pre-headcount data on termly basis. We anticipate that we will use the pre-headcount process to assess eligibility for the extended 30 hour entitlement and expect the data collection requirements to remain the same (see forms attached). We will need to review the time and dates of data collection to ensure that checks are carried out in good time, but also that they meet the requirements of the new guidance that is not yet available.

School will continue to provide data through the census process, advanced checking arrangement will be in line with EYPP checking. We will need to review the time and dates of data collection to

ensure that checks are carried out in good time, but also that they meet the requirements of the new guidance that is not yet available.

30. How will we support transition, information sharing and progress tracking between more than one provider?

A: At present a number of children use multiple provision and we need to track multiple settings (see Question 28)

We will work with Sure Start Teachers (who support PVI settings) and the Early Education Consultant (who supports maintained settings) to consider the additional challenge of more children using multiple provision and identify if there is additional guidance, advice and support we can give regarding this.